The female underſtanding has often been ſpoken of with contempt, as arriving ſooner at maturity than the male. I ſhall not anſwer this argument by alluding to the early proofs of reaſon, as well as genius, in Cowley, Milton, and Pope *, but only appeal to experience to decide whether young men, who are early introduced into company (and examples now abound), do not acquire the ſame precocity. So notorious is this fact, that the bare mentioning of it muſt bring before people, who at all mix in the world, the idea of a number of ſwaggering apes of men, whoſe underſtandings are narrowed by being brought into the ſociety of men when they ought to have been ſpinning a top or twirling a hoop.

It has alſo been aſſerted, by ſome naturaliſts, that men do not attain their full growth and ſtrength till thirty; but that women arrive at maturity by twenty. I apprehend that they reaſon on falſe ground, led aſtray by the male prejudice, which deems beauty the perfection of woman—mere beauty of features and complexion, the vulgar acceptation of the word, whilſt male beauty is allowed to have

* Many other names might be added.

ſome connection with the mind. Strength of body, and that character of countenance, which the French term a *phyſionomie*, women do not acquire before thirty, any more than men. The little artleſs tricks of children, it is true, are particularly pleaſing and attractive; yet, when the pretty freſhneſs of youth is worn off, theſe artleſs graces become ſtudied airs, and diſguſt every perſon of taſte. In the countenance of girls we only look for vivacity and baſhful modeſty; but, the ſpring-tide of life over, we look for ſoberer ſenſe in the face, and for traces of paſſion, inſtead of the dimples of animal ſpirits; expecting to ſee individuality of character, the only faſtener of the affections *. We then wiſh to converſe, not to fondle; to give ſcope to our imaginations as well as to the ſenſations of our hearts.

At twenty the beauty of both ſexes is equal; but the libertiniſm of man leads him to make the diſtinction, and ſuperannuated coquettes are commonly of the ſame opinion; for, when they can no longer inſpire love,

* The ſtrength of an affection is, generally, in the ſame proportion as the character of the ſpecies in the object beloved, is loſt in that of the individual.